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## *Tolkien's Library: An Annotated Checklist*, by Oronzo Cilli

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## Mythcon 51: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

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introduction either to Celtic studies or to scholarship regarding Celtic myth, but then it is not meant to be. Instead, I imagine that it will prove a valuable addition to ongoing conversations about these subjects.

A final note here: although the particular focus that I have identified above might seem inapplicable to scholarly work on Tolkien, the Inklings, or mythopoeic literature more generally, I actually found it quite thought-provoking with these topics in mind. The contributors' precise, able close readings of various myths immediately reminded me of Tolkien's famous allegory of the tower by the sea, when critics overlooked the beauty of a poem like *Beowulf* in trying to understand how it works—though here, I for one think that the “confusing babel” Tolkien might still have been frustrated by serves a much-needed purpose. In addition, some contributors do touch on mythopoeic projects, as when Grigory Bondarenko in his chapter “Ireland as Mesocosm” (53–71) examines “Mythopoeic models of the world” (54) in ways that, to my mind, could certainly be applied to understanding other authors' more consciously mythopoeic projects in fantasy literature as well.

All in all, *Celtic Myth in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Gods and Their Stories in a Global Perspective* might be specialized fare, but I maintain that it will serve those particular needs quite well indeed.

—Maria Alberto



**TOLKIEN'S LIBRARY: AN ANNOTATED CHECKLIST.** Oronzo Cilli. Edinburgh: Luna Press Publishing, 2019. 466 pp. ISBN 978-1-911143-67-3. \$39.00 paperback; \$50.00 hardback; \$10.69 e-book.

ALTHOUGH A BOOK SHOULD NOT BE JUDGED BY ITS COVER, *Tolkien's Library: An Annotated Checklist* delights our senses with its gorgeous medieval-style outer design by Jay Johnstone, which together with its superior trade paperback finish, tempts us to discover its contents. It is important to stress that this is not a typical cover-to-cover read, but rather a meticulous and scholarly research aid tool which took five years to complete. Oronzo Cilli is not only a Tolkien scholar but also a collector himself, which makes him ideal for authoring this type of volume, as we shall discover. A foreword by the well-known Tolkien expert Tom Shippey sets the bar high. The book begins with a preface, followed by six sections (A-F), and it is rounded off with a bibliography and nine indices, to be reviewed in turn.

Cilli clearly notes his aim in the preface: “to reconstruct Tolkien’s library or, better still, to be able to name the titles housed on his shelves” (xvii). He refers, of course, to an atemporal, intangible, and comprehensive compendium rather than to a datable physical library. This is further clarified by Cilli in a later article:

in my work, I have no presumption to insert all the books that Tolkien assuredly read. The basic criterion is to list both fiction and scholarship known to him because he had kept them for a time, or that found a place in his personal library for a week, or several years; or that he borrowed, bought, received as a gift, or gave himself to other relatives, friends and colleagues; or the ones he discussed during the meetings of the *Inklings*; or simply consulted. (“The Leaves Were Long, the Cover Was Green: A Reply to Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond” [“Leaves”] 15)

The author continues the introduction by providing a brief history of the destination of Tolkien’s books after his death, reviewing all the libraries where copies are stored, and the ones which ended up in the hands of private collectors and bookshops (xvii-xxii). At this point Cilli outlines his research methodology for the main section (A) to explain the sources he has browsed through: libraries, auction houses, private collections, specialized websites, Tolkien’s writings, and other scholarly research. This enabled him to compile a selection of all the books, works, and prints Tolkien might have read, perused, borrowed, owned, bought, or mentioned in his writings (xxii-xxviii). However, as in any encyclopedic work of its kind, there is room for speculation and additions. This fact has not escaped Shippey, who notes that it is a work in progress: “It joins that very select group of works, the most useful of all: a book we should keep, update, and write notes in the margin of, for the rest of our lives” (xvi). To this end, Cilli has set up [www.tolkienslibrary.blogspot.com](http://www.tolkienslibrary.blogspot.com) to gather comments and suggestions for future editions, creating a section on addenda and corrigenda which already incorporates a published first set of changes. A second revised edition is to be expected sometime soon, which will unlikely be the last. At the end of the methodology section, the reader gets a glimpse at the profundity of the research undertaken, with an unrelated anecdote on the conjectural origin of one of Elrond’s sentences,<sup>1</sup> providing potential sources dating as far back as 1813 (xxiii-xxv).

The study of Tolkien’s sources was addressed by Shippey early on in *The Road to Middle-earth* (1982). It continues to be widely researched as attested by the more contemporary *Tolkien’s Modern Middle Ages* (2005), edited by Jane

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<sup>1</sup> “Time was when a squirrel could go from tree to tree from what is now the Shire to Dunland west of Isengard” (*The Lord of the Rings* II.2.265).

Chance and Alfred K. Siewers; *Tolkien and the Study of his Sources: Critical Essays* (2011), edited by Jason Fisher; or individual articles such as Thomas Hillman's "These Are Not the Elves You're Looking For: Sir Orfeo, The Hobbit, and the Reimagining of the Elves" (2018) published in *Tolkien Studies*. Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull, in *The J.R.R. Tolkien Companion and Guide* (2006, revised and expanded edition 2017), have made numerous contributions to source studies as well, together with an ample list of works owned, consulted, received or given as presents, or known to Tolkien. However, Cilli is the first to compile all those findings with several additions and to order them systematically to facilitate searches in Section A, the largest of the present volume (1-326).<sup>2</sup>

Section A, Tolkien's Library, is composed of 2599 items and brings together the books, works, and offprints the professor read, knew of, owned or bought as presents throughout his lifetime. Cilli justifies the inclusion of each entry with varied proofs. In some cases, only confirmed ownership, borrowings, or mentions of Tolkien within the book are included. In others, in order to support each entry or add complimentary details, Cilli distinguishes among what he idiosyncratically calls primary, secondary, or *New English Dictionary* sources. Cilli's methodological choices have already been further expanded and commented in "Leaves," though additional clarifications on certain decisions considered below would be desirable.

For primary sources, Cilli undertook the arduous task of scanning both Tolkien's fictional and academic writings 1922-2016 (including posthumous works and epistles). Although the outcome is satisfactory, it is worth noting certain issues. The incorporation of works from the bibliography of George Lyman Kittredge's *A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight* (1916) as entries is problematical. Tolkien and E.V. Gordon recommend Kittredge's bibliography as suggested reading for Irish and French analogues of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (c. 1400) in their edition (1925). Yet, without any proof of Tolkien's direct acquaintance with the works, the primary source becomes a mere cross-reference as in no. A131-132 (18) or no. A1418 (171). Cilli provides specific editions of works whenever there is enough certainty to do so. However, occasionally the rule is applied with some degree of laxity, as with the possible though unconfirmed one volume version of William Blake's prophetic books,

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<sup>2</sup> Scull and Hammond have shared certain concerns regarding Section A's theoretical foundations ("*Tolkien's Library: An Annotated Checklist* (2019) by Oronzo Cilli" ["Library"] 1-6), which have already been answered by Cilli ("Leaves"). In his response, Cilli also includes a Post Scriptum with some potential problems he himself identified together with future research possibilities. Thus, considering those issues discussed at length, my review aims to focus on the remaining uncommented aspects.

since it is unknown which books and edition Tolkien read (21 no. A158). It is also slightly confusing that under the entry for *Beowulf*, *The Fight at Finnesburg* (17 no. A125) the primary sources are shortened as: *Beowulf* (1937), *Beowulf* (2002), and *Beowulf* (2014). These are works of different nature (an essay [1937], a longer version of it [2002] and a translation [2014]), and adding longer titles would not alter the overall length of the entry but would increase clarity.

Secondary sources are those extracted from the works of well-known contributors to Tolkien scholarship as Douglas A. Anderson, Michael D.C. Drout, Humphrey Carpenter, Raymond Edwards, Jason Fisher, Dimitra Fimi, Verlyn Flieger, John Garth, Wayne G. Hammond, Carl Hostetter, Stuart D. Lee, Catherine McIlwaine, Carl Phelpstead, John Rateliff, Christina Scull, Tom Shippey, Arden R. Smith, and Christopher Tolkien. Cilli describes the secondary sources as “Where the book is mentioned by a scholar who has had access to Tolkien’s writings or is a scholar whose scientific rigor is recognised by all” (xxvi). Although the academic thoroughness of the experts mentioned above is unquestionable, I consider a division should be made between claims based on sources of difficult access, such as unpublished epistles or books Tolkien annotated, and hypotheses, as these lie at different levels of veracity. This distinction is especially important for source studies for which a label could be added. Within secondary sources, Cilli also uses information from C.S. Lewis’s letters, though sometimes the evidence provided is circumstantial, such as a given article in the *Guardian* being read by Lewis during a gathering of the Inklings and therefore by Tolkien, though unproven (14 no. A96). Something similar occurs with Alan Garner’s *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen: A Tale of Alderley* (1960) which is quoted by Lewis as being influenced by Tolkien, but it fails again to prove that Tolkien read or knew the work (92 no. A741). This also applies to no. A178, since even if professor Tolkien is repeatedly quoted in the acknowledgements, it is not clarified if Tolkien helped in the revision of the manuscript, or if the author simply thanks him for his major contributions to the field (23). For theses Tolkien examined and which were later turned into books, it is uncertain if he knew of the final published work (17 no. A120), though in some cases that information is supplied by proving that a copy was sent to him (19 no. A142).

Tolkien, during the years 1919-1920 when he worked on *A New English Dictionary of Historical Principles* (NED 1984-1928), is known to have been commissioned to write 62 dictionary entries (listed in *The Ring of Words: Tolkien and the Oxford English Dictionary* (2006) by Peter Gilliver, Edmund Weiner, and Jeremy H. Marshall). Out of those 62, Cilli clarifies those he employs as sources: “the quotations included in twelve entries I know Tolkien’s slips thereof: *Waggle*, *Waistcoated*, *Waisted*, *Waiter*, *Waiting*, *Wake*, *Wallop*, *Walloping*, *Walm*, *Walnut*, *Walrus*, *Wariangle*” (“Leaves” 5). Although Cilli consulted Tolkien’s signed drafts

in the *Oxford University Press Archives*, he quotes from the entries of the 1928 edition of the *NED*, acknowledging that these have undergone changes by the editor. Cilli is critical about the books gathered in this way, believing it was unlikely Tolkien read some of them due to their varied themes, and he may have simply used the text for the quotes which illustrate the definitions as provided by a reader (xxvi). Moreover, Cilli saves the quotations from Tolkien's slips belonging to the *Oxford University Press Archives* to include them as primary sources for the entry corresponding to part II of volume X (V-Z) of *NED*, where he lengthily cites from enlightening passages (217-218 no. A1721).

I endorse Shippey's belief that this is "the work with most potential for giving us a truer understanding of Tolkien" (xi). Shippey further specifies that:

We have here, then, only a sample of Tolkien's reading. But it is a large, significant, well-organised and often revealing sample. It deserves detailed and careful study. Such study will throw up many new insights into Tolkien's thoughts, his life-experience, and the way that experience expressed itself in his fiction. (xv)

Shippey also believes this will trigger new investigations, since Tolkien's reading habits tell us much about his interests in languages of diverse origins, history, canonical English literary works, contemporary literature of his time, popular works, and even pamphlets (xi-xv). This in fact is Cilli's chief motivation: "the goal has always been, as it is also now, to satisfy the curiosity and the love for Tolkien in offering other scholars and fans an operative basis upon which to found their research" ("Leaves" 24).

Section A is praiseworthy for the discovery of different types of new material. Tolkien's Neoplatonic views have often been asserted without being able to prove any sources (Chance 59; Caldecott 75; Imbert 75).<sup>3</sup> Scull and Hammond made a valuable contribution by confirming Boethius, which is incorporated in the present volume (23 no. 174). Cilli has discovered that Tolkien read Saint Augustine, bishop of Hippo, which is a useful addition in the context of modern scholarship (10 no. 69). Related to this, St. Thomas Aquinas has also been an attributed influence on Tolkien, but the source had not yet been confirmed (Birzer 21; McIntosh 33; Imbert 75). Fortunately, Cilli does offer a new finding in this area, presenting seven volumes of *Summa Theologica* (1485) which were read in great detail, demonstrated by the ubiquitous annotations in four of the volumes (287 no. A2294-2300). Moreover, Cilli mentions these books were confirmed by Christopher Tolkien to have been purchased in the 1920s, which means that they were read before Tolkien wrote his major fictional works (287).

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<sup>3</sup> There are more studies on this topic all cited by Imbert: four from the 1980s and two from the 2000s (75n4). See also Michael Halsall's Ph.D. dissertation.

This section also opens the door to certainty regarding previously stated hypothetical claims. The following example, out of several, excels at demonstrating how Cilli's work can effectively help to tie loose ends. Eric Stanley, Rawlinson and Bosworth professor of Anglo-Saxon in Oxford between 1977-1991, acknowledges that he was Tolkien's student from 1948-1951 (123). Stanley narrates in an autobiographical article that during an academic party when he met Tolkien again years later,

I went up to him, saying, 'You won't remember me, Professor Tolkien, but ages ago I attended your seminar', and I gave my name. 'I know,' he said in reply, 'and read you too.' I knew well that he was not much inclined to read the kind of stuff on Old and Middle English that I had written, and thought how kind that to give me pleasure he told me what was possibly a white lie. (141)

Cilli proves not only that Tolkien read Stanley but also that Tolkien owned an offprint of one of Stanley's articles, now preserved at the Weston Library as part of Tolkien's personal Celtic library (272 no. A2185).

Cilli's contributions in section A do not end there. There are too many to be listed in full in a single review, but I will attempt to cover some relevant examples to display the work's potential. Cilli's book also determines when Tolkien consulted certain volumes for the first time and on subsequent occasions, his study routines, or borrowing periods. Cilli has found out about unrecorded books Tolkien received or bought as presents such as *Danton: A Study* (1899), which he purchased for his son Michael Tolkien (16 no. A117). Unlike in previous similar studies, for most works a specific confirmed edition or several are provided, only in minor cases are these details guessed or omitted altogether.

Cilli does not simply offer a compilation of common or readily accessible knowledge. In certain cases he provides quotations from sources of difficult access. For instance, he includes lengthy citations from unpublished correspondence and from books annotated by Tolkien and now in private hands, some owned by Cilli himself or other collectors whose names are given when known. The latter reveal matters as diverse as Tolkien's rejection of the theory of the Swedish origin of *Beowulf* (25 no. A189), the Anglo-Saxon etymologies for hobbit and Gollum (25 no. A190), the source for the name Bag End (227-228 no. A1809), or about his thoughts on modern translations, with special reference to those from Old English sources or Old Norse as that of a modern rendering to French (300 no. A2409).

The annotations can sometimes disclose the parts of a book he read for certain in anthologies, collections, and reference works, since Cilli incorporates what Tolkien scribbled or the page numbers he quoted from. The occasionally



reported bookmarks also aid in this task (5 no. A29, 121 no. A990, 224 no. A1772, 229 no. A1820, 314 no. A2504). For old editions, notes specifying which pages remain uncut give us a good idea of how much Tolkien read of a given volume (293 no. A2350, 299 no. A2401, 324 no. A2589).

In spite of the fact that the ambitious Section A will never reach absolute completion, it is worth noting some sources and entries missing. These of course are merely a tiny fraction of all the future additions and discoveries to be incorporated to the list. The entry for Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908 [103 no. 835]) could include, aside from letter no. 51, no. 145 as well whereby Tolkien promises "not to become like Mr Toad" after having received many favorable reviews for *The Fellowship of the Ring* (*The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien* 182). Shippey also refers to various works which he believes were influential on Tolkien and which are not included in Cilli's corresponding entries, those being: George MacDonald's *Lilith* (1895 [*The Road to Middle Earth* 351]), John Mandeville's *Travels* (c. 1375 [349]), *The Ruin* (8th century [33, 344]) and William Morris's *The Wood Beyond the World* (1894 [Introduction xvii]). Regarding more possible primary and secondary source additions, in a 1944 letter, Tolkien makes clear that he is well acquainted with Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1603) and that he read it several times (*Letters* 88, #76). What is more, as Ryan indicates, Tolkien, together with C.S. Lewis, H.V.D. Dyson, C.L. Wrenn and N. Coghill, gave a series of lectures on *Hamlet* in Oxford during Hilary term, though he does not specify the date (50). Regarding entries, Cilli incorporates Alexander Jones's edition of *The Jerusalem Bible* (1966) to which Tolkien contributed by translating the Book of Jonah (135 no. 1121). However, as Brendan N. Wolfe clarifies, Tolkien was not directly translating from the Hebrew source into English, but rather from the previously published French translation, only aided by occasional consultations of the original (15). Therefore, *La Bible de Jérusalem* (1956, or 1948-1955 in fascicles) should also be considered a book Tolkien read, at least specifically the Book of Jonah.

Section B records 108 signed and unsigned academic and literary publications by Tolkien, which form a miscellanea of different writings ranging from those which saw the light while still a student at King Edward's (1910) to a letter to the editor of the *Daily Telegraph* in old age (1972). The information reproduced comes mainly from Bertenstam's *A Chronological Bibliography of the Writings of J.R.R. Tolkien* (2015). It is complemented by information from TolkienBooks.net: for example, with two recordings from *Linguaphone: Conversational Course: English* (1930) in which Tolkien participated as a interlocutor, though it is unknown if he wrote the texts (332 no. B41-42), and the unacknowledged contribution to *An Edition of Be Lîflade ant te Passiun of Seinte Iulienne* by S.R.T.O. d'Ardenne (1936 [334 no. B56]). To this, Cilli adds information regarding additional sources where the works have been reprinted such as in

no. B9 (329). Overall, it constitutes an improved though briefer list, and therefore less informative at times, omitting for example page numbers for the containers of the riddle-poem "*Enigmata Saxonica Nuper Inventa Duo*" (1923 [329-330 no. B18]).

Section C includes a list of fifty published interviews of Tolkien and reviews of his works (1937-1972) that he is known to have perused as demonstrated by the primary or secondary sources defined above (340-344). Of a total of 26 reviews, three comment on *The Hobbit* (1937), twelve on *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), two on *The Two Towers* (1954), two on *The Return of the King* (1955), three on *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955), two on *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* (1962), one on *Smith of Wootton Major* (1967), and another on "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics" (1937). There are 22 interviews, an article on the Ace Books illegal publication issue, and an autobiographical one by Tolkien himself. Under each item, details of interest are included, and for reviews, Tolkien's opinion of the critics' comments. I found this section slightly confusing due to the authors being alphabetically ordered, and I consider it could benefit from a chronological timeline instead. Most of the items are drawn from well-known Tolkien writings or other scholars' work, yet there is some room for five new findings by Cilli. These comprise interviews, two of which are in Swedish and Norwegian.

Section D recalls all the theses and dissertations Tolkien supervised and examined, or both, during 1929-1960. This had already been done partly in 2002 by John S. Ryan (56-58), and Cilli completes it with further data from Scull and Hammond (*The J.R.R. Tolkien Companion and Guide: Chronology* 142-573). Cilli's only addition is no. D47, supported by an unpublished epistle (351), though like in no. D26, it is uncertain what Tolkien's role was; seemingly he was neither an examiner nor supervisor (348). Cilli does not forget to include relevant information such as the beginning and end date, the college, as well as the manuscript reference for those deposited at the Bodleian Libraries.

Section E covers the time Tolkien was a member of the Early English Text Society (1938-1972), a group devoted to the publication of unissued medieval works. Members received galleys so as to submit comments on the edition; therefore Tolkien is quite likely to have read or at least perused each of the forty-seven publications which came out during the time his membership lasted. Cilli helps us discover that Tolkien's interest in these publications germinated very early on, since while a student in Exeter College, he considered this collection to be of great practical value (12 no. A84-85). Moreover, we learn that he owned some volumes before becoming a member of the society (16 no. A113), and that he reviewed *Hali Meidenhad*, published by the society in 1923, in *The Times Literary Supplement* (330 no. B20).

Section F lists in a systematic and convenient chart format Tolkien's lectures at the universities of Leeds and Oxford (1920-1959). Cilli has extracted the information from the University of Leeds *Calendar* (1920-1925) for Leeds and from Scull and Hammond's *Chronology* for Oxford. Regarding the former, Scull and Hammond clarify that "in the case of the University of Leeds it would be more accurate to say that these were lectures offered in the English courses, for only some of which Tolkien could have had time to bear responsibility" ("Library" 4). Regarding the latter, Cilli fails to acknowledge the primary source for most of the information: the term-time weekly issues of *The Oxford Magazine* (1925-1959). Cilli could have added certain additional information from Ryan's article that he includes in the bibliography as notes (*Lecturing* 45-62). For example, during Trinity term 1920 Tolkien gave a lecture on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* at the University of Oxford in the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages as a non-affiliated member (*Lecturing* 46).

Cilli includes a bibliography with all primary sources consulted including Tolkien's manuscripts with their references, unpublished letters alphabetically ordered by the addressee, and his works, incorporating posthumously published ones. For the secondary sources, these are divided into books and journals; web sources comprising auction houses, collector sites and rare book dealers; archival sources; and private collections (369-385). The bibliography, which hopefully will be further expanded in future editions, lists several uncommon sources which may aid very concrete browsing.

Indices are convenient for the time-constrained scholar in monographs or collections of essays, but these become vital in a work of this nature. The indices are divided into 5 parts: Section A "Index of Authors and Editors" (386-397) and "Index of Books" with dates of publication for those in which the edition is specified (398-422); Section B "Index of J.R.R. Tolkien's Writings" with the dates of publication (423-424); Section C "Index of Authors" (425) and "Index of titles of Interviews & Reviews" ordered by type, date and title of the work reviewed (426); Section D "Index of Students" (427) and "Index of Theses" with beginning or end date (428-429); and Section E "Index of Editors" (430) and "Index of Early English Text Society Publications" with the dates of publication as well (431-432). Although nine indices may seem excessive, with a bit of patience one can discover the thoughtful time and care Cilli has put into each of them to make precise quick consultations, the chief purpose of the book in my opinion. Considering the great diversity in the languages of the works included in Section A, an index which sorts the entries by tongues, old and modern, would be a laborious but highly practical addition.

Despite its incomplete nature and minor flaws, Cilli's work is one of those rare contributions well on the way of becoming a set text in Tolkien studies. Undoubtedly worth its price, *Tolkien's Library: An Annotated Checklist* is

an essential time-saving research tool for any Tolkien scholar and for those avid readers willing to expand their encyclopaedical knowledge on the author.

—Andoni Cossio

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